Life Restrainted by State Security’s Follow-up

Report on the National Security’s follow-up policy towards former detainees
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EGYPTIAN FRONT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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A report by
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Executive Summary

Considering that the National Security - formerly known as State Security - decided to restate its use of the follow-up policy against a wider spectrum of political opponents, the Egyptian Front aims, through this report, at examining the nature of this policy and its various forms as it imposes complete confinement and a state of permanent fear on those subjected to it. The report attempts to conclude a legal characterization of this policy and the extent to which the national security has jurisdiction to implement it. Also, the report attempts to reflect on its negative impacts on the persons subjected to it, as it imposes many restrictions on them, especially since it is exercised by a notorious security apparatus such as National Security.

The report relied on six audio conversations that took place over the Internet, with individuals who were subjected to follow-up, and another audio conversation with a relative of a person subjected to the follow-up, in an effort to find out the characteristics of this policy; who is responsible for it and its various forms. The report also relied on these testimonies to identify the practices accompanying this policy, which involve serious violations of the rights and freedoms of individuals subject to follow-up, which is evident through comparing these practices with the Egyptian law and constitution and relevant international treaties. The report also relied on a written conversation with a lawyer to inquire about the history of this practice, in addition to some journalistic articles and the Police Act, for the purpose of investigating the competencies of the national security agency and its historical developments.

At the end of the report, the Egyptian Front concluded that there is no clear legal basis for using the follow-up policy in its current form. Nevertheless, the amended Police Act in 2020 provided, through a loose text in Article 125, an open authority for the National Security Agency to exercise its powers and achieve its goals, thus jeopardizing the sovereignty of law and the principle of separation of powers. The report also deduced the striking progression that has come to currently characterize the follow-up, which is it being practiced against all sorts of former detainees, and not against those with extremist religious ideas as it was before the January revolution. The results of the report confirm that the persons who undergo follow-up are subjected to many human rights violations, such as imposing restrictions on their freedom of movement, targeting their psychological well-being, subjecting them to torture and cruel treatment, and lastly, subjecting to them to illegal detention and arbitrary arrest.
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Introduction

Following the events of June 30, 2013, the new government issued a decision to restitute the State Security Service, while changing its name to the National Security Agency. Even though the name changed, it continued to play its historical role in political repression and social control processes aimed at stifling civil society in Egypt. As the agency resumed its work, it expanded in its arrests of political opponents and activists, while also introducing new practices to restrict these individuals. The agency also continued to use practices it used before the January 25 revolution of 2011, including follow-up, and it is likely that using the follow-up again began in 2019, which is done through targeting former detainees and continuing to summon them to National Security headquarters at specific times in order to conduct it, in which National Security officers monitor the personal lives of these detainees in all its dimensions.

Follow-up is a policy that greatly controls the shaping of people's lives after their release from prison by imposing a state of complete control over these people. Given that follow-up is a policy applied in the post-prison phase, and is not considered a legal detention, precautionary measures, or police surveillance, as each of those has its own legal characterization, this report, in the first part, attempts to shed light on the legal adaptation of follow-up through considering the jurisdiction of the National Security Agency. This will come following the section that presents a review of the current various forms of follow-up in practice and their target groups. It also discusses its use before the January 25 revolution and how it progressed since then.

The second part of the report discusses the serious violations accompanying the follow-up, in terms of the restrictions it imposes on the freedoms of people subject to them, whether they are restrictions on movement or freedom of movement inside and outside the country. This section also deals with a very important dimension represented in the psychological impact of being subject to follow-up and the hardship of overcoming the trauma of imprisonment. In addition, those subject to follow-up may be subjected to illegal detention, preceded in some cases by arbitrary arrests. These violations also extend to torture and cruel treatment that may be experienced during follow-up. The report examines all these violations in light of the Egyptian constitution, law, and relevant international treaties. Finally, the report's conclusion summarizes its most important findings.

In writing this report, the Egyptian Front for Human Rights relied on six online audio conversations with individuals who underwent follow-up from 2019 to

Methodology of the Report

2021, an audio chat also online with a relative of a person who underwent follow-up in 2020, and a written conversation with a lawyer specializing in defending political opponents from the 1990s until now. All the talks were conducted from February to May 2021, and probed the interviewees about what it is, how it is implemented, the places designated for its implementation, the security agency responsible for it, as well as its associated violations. While the conversation that took place with the lawyer sought to inquire about the legal framework of the follow-up policy and the recent expansion of its scope and the difference between the follow-up in its current form and what it was during the era of former President Hosni Mubarak.

The report is also based on the analysis of some texts of the Egyptian constitution and local laws such as the Police Act, as well as Criminal Procedures; all in search of legal adaptation for follow-up and the establishment of the national security agency and seeking the determination of its competencies. This is in addition to presenting international conventions and treaties that are related to some of the issues discussed in the report, as well as relaying some articles on the history of the national security agency - formerly state security - and the changes that occurred in it at different eras, concluding with some literature in psychology.

The Egyptian Front faced a major challenge in writing this report, which was the unwillingness of many of those who were subjected or are still subject to follow-up, to speak to our researchers due to security concerns related to their personal safety. In the interest of the safety of the interviewees who spoke to the Egyptian Front, all personal data referring to them, as well as the names of the police stations and National Security headquarters where they are subject to follow-up, have been withheld. The report will only refer to these individuals with initial letters that do not reflect their real names.

Follow-up, as the National Security officers call it, is a policy practiced by the national security agency towards political opponents who have previously been held in pretrial detention, or who have previously carried out a court ruling against them or obtained a verdict of acquittal. National Security officers set
What is Follow-up?

fixed weekly or monthly appointments or irregular appointments to carry out the follow-up at one of the agency’s headquarters to which his residence is listed on his identity card, also, the person may be summoned by phone for he follow-up at times that are not specified in advance.

Follow-up takes two basic forms in its application, the first in which a person goes to the headquarters of the National Security Sector for the purpose of proving attendance only without being questioned or investigated, and after his presence is proven and all his personal belongings are withdrawn for a duration that may last hours, he is allowed to go. The second form, in which a person goes to the agency’s headquarters for the purpose of being investigated by one of the officers or sometimes more than one officer, this investigation is conducted with the person about his personal life, work and some other issues related to him, in addition to searching his phone and asking him about his communications. This second form includes several violations that the report will address in later parts, in addition to the fact that sometimes 24 hours or more may pass before a person is allowed to leave.

Follow-up is not a new policy, as it was practiced during the era of former President Hosni Mubarak by the State Security Investigations Agency following the violent incidents of the 1990s, at that time it targeted members of the Islamist and jihadist organizations, whether or not they had previously been administratively arrested. It was based, in general, on suspecting a person with extremist religious tendencies in order to ensure that he does not join any terrorist organizations, or return to committing acts of violence again.

The implementation of the follow-up policy was suspended between 2011 and 2013, before it was resumed again by the National Security Agency - the brand new name of the State Security Investigation Agency - in the same form and procedures and against the same people with extremist religious ideas. As of 2019, the practice extended its application to include prisoners of conscience, individu-

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2 Online chats, February-May 2021.
3 Written conversation, May 2021.
4 IBID
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als previously detained in publishing cases, journalists, human rights defenders and pacifist political activists.

It is important not to confuse follow-up with precautionary measures or police surveillance, as precautionary measures are a legal procedure stipulated in Article 201 of the Code of Criminal Procedure as an alternative to pretrial detention, and police surveillance is a complementary punishment stipulated in Articles 28 and 38 of the Penal Code. The person implements the measures or surveillance inside the police station based on a court decision or ruling, respectively, and signs official books stating that he is inside this police station, whereas both are specified in days and hours. This is in contrast to follow-up, which has no explicit legal basis or text, as it is neither a precautionary measure nor a punishment, and the person spends an unspecified number of hours inside the National Security headquarters, which is an illegal detention center.
Obscure legitimacy of the follow-up policy

In light of the legal ambiguity associated with the follow-up policy, we believe that researching the competencies of the National Security Agency, may be useful in identifying the legal characteristics of this policy. The State Security Investigation Service was dissolved right after the January 25, 2011 revolution, it was restored again following the events of June 30, 2013, with its name changed to the National Security Agency. No decision regarding the re-institution of the agency was published in the Official Gazette until September 3, 2020, when Law 175/2020 was issued to amend some provisions of Law 109/1971 regarding the Police Authority. These amendments were introduced to the law in Chapter Three, Section Four, entitled “Provisions for the National Security Agency,” Article 122 defined National Security as “one of the security agencies in the Ministry of the Interior, directly subordinate to the Minister of Interior and attached to the facilities affiliated with it, which includes the headquarters of the main sector and its geographical departments and offices affiliated to it throughout the Republic.”

The law defines in Article 125 the powers of the National Security Agency as follows:

“The Agency is concerned with combating terrorism, dangerous and organized crime and other related crimes as well as confronting threats that target the homeland security. The agency participates in setting security policies and following up on their implementation. It is also committed to implementing what the Minister of Interior assigns to it within the scope of his competence which is specified in this chapter; for this purpose, the agency has the right to take all procedures to ensure that it achieves its objectives and competencies, in particular the following:

1. Preventing, combating and apprehending the perpetrators of the crimes stipulated in Chapter Two of Book Two of the Penal Code related to felonies and misdemeanors harming the government from inside and all forms of organized and dangerous transnational crime and other related crimes in cooperation with the competent authorities and

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security agencies.
2. Preventing, combating and apprehending perpetrators of crimes that are stipulated for in the Anti-Terrorism Law promulgated by Law 94/2015 and related crimes.
3. Expressing its opinion on granting foreigners permission to enter or reside in the country, and taking the necessary measures against them in accordance with the law.
4. Collecting information related to the safety of the state and presenting it to the Minister of Interior and submitting any data, information or studies requested by him.
5. The right to request access to or reservation of any files, data or papers, or to obtain a copy of them from the party in which these files, data or papers are located by a substantial judicial order.
6. Cooperation and exchanges of experiences, information and data with the country’s national security authorities.
7. Cooperation and coordination with ministries, authorities, and national bodies to ensure the protection of the state’s national security and its supreme interests, as well as assisting those bodies and institutions in facing threats, by providing them with advice and security recommendations.
8. Representation of the Ministry of Interior in the fields of international security and police cooperation in relation to combating and confronting crimes, exchanging information, conducting investigations, gathering evidence, exchanging experiences, training and technical cooperation, which fall within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior in accordance with the rules in this regard.
9. Monitoring problems facing the state and measuring the direction of public opinion in this regard, as well as submitting reports on them to the concerned authorities to take the necessary measures towards solving them and containing their effects”.

In view of the previously stated legal competencies, it does not directly or indirectly state the agency’s competence to conduct the follow-up or even any other procedure similar to it. However, the previous article of the law gave the National Security Agency an unspecified authority in the loose sentence “to take all measures that ensure it achieves its goals and competencies,” without specifying what these measures are or even their legal limits. Thus, the law has allowed the National Security Agency to carry out any security activity that can be claimed to achieve the agency’s objectives. Of course, follow-up or other policies of threats and intimidation of activists may fall under the scope of these activities.
First: Constraints on Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement is one of the basic rights guaranteed by the constitution and Egyptian law to all citizens and is also stipulated in international treaties. The 2019-amended Egyptian constitution prohibits the infringement of freedom of movement as a basic right for individuals, except by virtue of a court ruling in Article 62, which stipulates “Freedom of movement, residence, and immigration are guaranteed. No citizen shall be deported from the territory of the state, nor prevented from returning or leaving the territory of the state, or have house arrest imposed upon him, or be banned from residing in a specific area except by a substantial judicial order for a specified period, only in cases specified in the law Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “1- Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of the State. 2- Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”

The National Security Agency imposes extensive restrictions on freedom of movement of persons subjected to follow-up, these restrictions extend to going outside the country as well, as all movements of a person are subjected to the time and place of follow-up, which is restricted to the person's place of residence on their identity card, not to mention that it may not be the actual residence of many people. These restrictions have a grave impact on the social, educational and professional life of individuals, as confirmed by many of those who are subjected to follow-up in interviews conducted by the Egyptian Front.

In addition to the conditions of spatial and temporal follow-up that inherently restrict freedom of movement, National Security officers control the movements of these individuals within the country painstakingly, as they are not allowed to go or move to live elsewhere for any reason, whether it is work or study, without the permission of these officers and prior approval. A.A recounts,

“They told me, we know everything about you, you are within our reach, and you are forbidden to move without telling us. Do not change your home address, and do not go anywhere without our prior knowledge.”

These restrictions also extend to the social duties of these individuals, B.G says,

“I did not know how to do anything, when they knew that I went...”

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7 Online chat, April 2021
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outside my district, they would ask where I went and why... once I was attending the funeral of my friend’s father and I was due for my monthly follow-up at one p.m. then, but that day I went at 5 p.m. The officer asked me, “Why did you come late and why did you go to Cairo without informing us?”

These restrictions commanded the slightest movement, such as spending holidays, M.H. said,

I can’t even go for one-day summer vacation without telling them, this puts a lot of pressure on me.

More than one person confirmed to the Egyptian Front that adhering to a specific geographical area to implement the follow-up limits the job opportunities that can be obtained, especially if the follow-up is imposed on them on a weekly basis or for more than a day per week, in addition to that, the person undergoing this must be always ready to go to the Security Agency’s headquarters at any time when they are summoned by the phone, in addition to set appointments. This is what M.H also experienced,

I commit myself to follow-up 3 days a week, which of course leaves me unable to leave my district at all, I am also unable to go to work in another place as it is better to return every two days in time for the follow-up.

Likewise, the studying conditions do not allow a person to follow-up at another National Security headquarters if the person is going to enroll in an educational institution outside the governorate in which he resides, as reported by S.A., a relative of a person who underwent follow-up.

He told the officer that his university is in Cairo (He resides in a city that is about two-hours far from Cairo), the officer replied that he can go and return in time for follow-up.

All interviews conducted by the Egyptian Front revealed that travel outside the country is permanently prohibited for individuals subjected to follow-up, a ban that is not based on a travel-ban from the investigation authorities represented by the Public Prosecution or the judiciary. A person’s insistence on traveling may result in being stopped at the airport, and having their passport being withdrawn, and not being released until after the approval of the follow-up officer responsible for their file within the National Security Agency, which is what B.G. was exposed to,

I took the exit visa and while waiting for the plane, two officers came to take me from the terminal. The officer asked where I was going, I told him I was traveling, he then asked why I was traveling and

8 Online chat, April 2021.
9 Online chat, April 2021.
10 Online chat, April 2021.
11 Online chat, April 2021.
said that I couldn’t and that I passed by mistake and that I should have asked for permission from the State Security first, I told him that I did not know that I should tell State Security that I want to travel, and he responded by telling me that I would not be able to travel. Then he took my passport and ticket away, saying that I can recover the passport from the National Security office where I follow-up\textsuperscript{12}.

Second: Targeting Psychological well-being

Violations accompanying detention in Egypt start from the moment of arrest; most detainees are forcibly disappeared at first, where they are subjected to torture, and placed in poor and inhuman detention conditions for long periods that may last for years. There is no doubt that this experience causes a major imbalance in the psychological state of individuals, often exposing them to psychological trauma. The trauma can be defined as “the unusual traumatic event that occurs to a person, which is characterized by serious harm, suddenness, helplessness and passiveness in which the traumatized person finds himself unable to mobilize his defensive system or his methods of confrontation.”\textsuperscript{13}

Studies indicate that undergoing the experience of prison and its violations extend to affect the persons even after their release, as they need to get rid of this condition and restore their confidence in themselves and their abilities, and recover and overcome it\textsuperscript{14}. Indeed, studies have found that most of the former detainees undergo intensive psychological treatment sessions, in order to help them get rid of the effects of the detention experience, and move on with their personal lives, as some of them are often diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder\textsuperscript{15}. The danger of follow-up in its current form lies in the fact that it targets the mental health of these former detainees by inducing trauma and reviving the traumatic experience all over again\textsuperscript{16}.

Psychological literature indicates that the arousal of psychological trauma occurs when a person is placed in the same circumstances and conditions that bring him back to the traumatic experience and the circumstances surrounding it. Of course, the follow-up conditions expose individuals to reliving the traumatic experience - or to provoke psychological trauma - as being inside this place again reminds them of the traumatic experience represented in the first investigation with them by the National Security officers after their arrest. Which is of-

\textsuperscript{12} Online chat, February 2021.
\textsuperscript{14} Lonna Yakbson, Knoth Nelson, Trauma and Rehabilitation Torture Survivors, translation Seif El-Din Daghfous, Shukri Al-Mabkhout, Muhammad Al-Shaibani, (Tunisia: International Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, Copenhagen and the Arab Institute for Human Rights, 2000), p. 188, Beirut Arab University Library.
\textsuperscript{15} Zaggar, Zagour, “Psychological Trauma in the DSM5: Dimensions and Limits.”
\textsuperscript{16} Thomas Hoover, The Impossibility of Forgetting? A publication that explains and gives information about post-traumatic stress disorder, translation. Sami Saliba, Swiss Red Cross, PT, https://assets.ctfassets.net/fclx/f7o732gj/2Ox.
ten accompanied by verbal insults, torture and enforced disappearance, and they may be forced to film confessions in some cases.

The logical result of being repeatedly exposed to psychological trauma is the inability to recover from this trauma despite the continued psychological treatment, which is confirmed by A.A.

“I go to follow-up in the same place where I was tortured and forcibly disappeared, where I was forced to film confessions of things I did not do, where I stood for investigation twice, thrice and four times... No matter how much I take medication and or how I follow up with psychiatrists, I never get better. When they summon me, I feel that they are keen to bring me back to zero again, and I must always be afraid and relive the experience of imprisonment, arrest and disappearance.”

Psychology also indicates that the symptoms of trauma include a person’s feeling of constant fear that can develop into chronic anxiety over time, in addition the inability to continuously experience positive feelings. This is the feeling that all those interviewed by the Egyptian Front have confirmed experiencing, reflected in their constant fear of being arrested again and reliving that experience, especially since they were first arrested at the National Security headquarters. A.G. describes this feeling:

“Every time I went there, I would be very afraid that I would be back again and tense, and I would keep wondering whether the officer would let me walk out or would he change his mind and imprison me. I would keep remembering the Qur’anic verse that says as [as if they were being driven to death and they (actually) saw it].”

17 Online Chat, April 2021.
18 Yaak bson, Nelson, Survivors of Torture, Trauma and Rehabilitation, Ibid
19 Online Chat, February 2021.
B.G describes her negative emotions in relation to the follow-up:

_This follow-up literally made me want to go back to prison again, because I am constantly threatened. I don’t know if I will go back again or not. I was terrified when an unknown number called me because at times the policemen used to call me from unknown numbers, my heart would shake and I felt a tingling in it._

Follow-up creates a state of constant tension and pressure for those who are subject to it. If someone accidentally and unintentionally switched off their phone, they would fall into a state of terror and panic, fearing that they might have received a call from the National Security at that time, as B.G. recounts,

_When they call me and I don’t respond right away, they would yell at me; how could you not answer the phone, once I responded by saying that the phone was on the charger and it was on silent mode, the officer said, there is no such thing as silent, you turn on the sound of the phone because when we call you, you hear, there is no such thing as calling you with no answer._

In addition to the direct threat of being arrested again if the phone is switched off, M.Kh. says,

_The officer told me, if I called and your phone is switched off, you will be upset and you know how we will find you._

**Third: Torture and cruel treatment**

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Treatment or Punishment defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”

The amended Egyptian constitution in 2019 guarantees the right to bodily integrity in Article 55: “Anyone who is arrested, imprisoned, or has his freedom restricted must be treated in a manner that preserves his dignity, and may not be tortured, intimidated, coerced, or harmed physically or morally.”

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20 Online Chat, February 2021.
21 Online Chat, February 2021.
22 Online Chat, April 2021.
in Article 126, punishes the perpetrators of torture with an explicit text: “Any public official or employee who orders the torture of an accused person or does it himself in order to induce him to confess shall be punished with imprisonment from three to ten years.”

All the testimonies documented by the Egyptian Front of those who were subjected to follow-up included threatening with imprisonment again by policemen or officers of the National Security Agency. The reasons for the threat were either the person was late for the scheduled time, or that the phone was turned off or having not answered their calls, which is what happened with M.Kh.

_The policeman took me to the investigation officer because I was only 15 minutes late, he blindfolded me before leaving and during the investigation the officer went on calling me names, insulting my family and threatening me with hurting them, he said that if I missed the white suit, he would take me back to prison, and I’ll wear it again_²⁴.

Sometimes the threat comes without reason during the investigation process as a kind of creating fear in the hearts of people to urge them to make certain statements, as S.M. states,

_I was threatened during the investigation that I would go back and be imprisoned again if I didn’t tell the officer what he wanted_²⁵.

Six people who were subjected to follow-up and whom the Egyptian Front spoke to stated that they were blindfolded for long periods during the interrogation, B.G recounts,

_After hours of investigation, the officer took me from the office I was in to meet another officer, while leaving someone blindfolded me and took me to an office for investigation._

B.J. was also the only one among the interviewees in this report whose hands were handcuffed in one of the follow-up times:

_I went into the hall that I go through every time, yet I found someone standing at the end of it, motioning me to walk towards him, when I did he said I should face the wall, he took my mobile and bag then he handcuffed and blindfolded me, this time I thought that’s it, I will not go out again_²⁶.

Three people of whom the Egyptian Front interviewed confirmed that they had been subjected to verbal and physical abuse, as the officer beat them during the interrogation to force them to cooperate with him or to give confessions and names of people they knew nothing about. S.M recounts being slapped hard on the face in one of the follow-ups;

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²⁴ Online chat, April 2021.
²⁵ Online chat, April 2021.
²⁶ Online chat, April 2021.
[You are a liar, don’t pretend to be innocent, nobody comes here without being guilty] then he slapped me again. I was held in the investigation with him for three hours.”

While M.K. recounts being insulted,

the policeman blindfolded me again, I sat for an hour and a half, then the officer came to me and asked why I am here, I told him that the measures were canceled and showed him the certificate from the prosecution. He told me that I should know where to shove this certificate, saying a profane word. He humiliated me, I told him I was only asking, he responded by saying that they are the ones who ask questions here.

Fourth: Unlawful Detention and Arbitrary Arrest

The amended Egyptian constitution in 2019 guarantees the freedoms of individuals and makes them inviolable and not to be infringed upon, as stated in the text of Article 54: “Personal freedom is a natural right, and it is inviolable and un-touchable, and except in the case of flagrante delicto, no one may be arrested, searched, or imprisoned, or have his freedom restricted in any way except by a substantial judicial order required by the investigation. Article 40 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 150/1950 stipulates that “no person may be arrested or imprisoned without an order from the legally competent authorities, and he must be treated in a manner that preserves human dignity, and may not be harmed physically or morally.”

Testimonies obtained by the Egyptian Front stated that the subjects of follow-up suffered illegal detention by keeping them for long periods inside the headquarters of the National Security in conditions similar to those of suspects

27 Online chat, April 2021.
28 Online chat, April 2021.
arrested by the National Security, except that these people go to follow-up voluntarily. Whereas, a form of follow-up includes an investigation or interrogation that lasts for hours, in which the person remains incommunicado and prohibited from using his personal phone, until the officer allows him to leave. Sometimes this interrogation is preceded by a long waiting period that seems a kind of nuisance, as A.A. recounts,

*Every time I go, at first I stay in a waiting area that is full of chairs and has a fan, sometimes I wait for hours and then go to the interrogation upstairs, once it lasted from early in the morning until 10 p.m. and another time it was for 4 hours, where we kept repeating the same words over and over*[^29].

At other times, these people are also subjected to being kept for long periods inside the headquarters of the National Security even after the investigation has ended, without any justification, as B.G says,

*After I went inside, the policeman said, “Stay here for a while, and I will let you in to the officer.” Well, I went there at 5 in the afternoon, and I left at 7 in the morning.*[^30]

During the period of detention after the end of the investigation, the person is also prohibited from using his personal phone and completely isolated from the outside world. It is important to note here that a large number of National Security buildings are unknown to citizens, as these buildings do not contain any indication of their nature, they are very difficult for citizens to enter, which increases the isolation of the people subjected to follow-up.

In a remarkable exercise of the follow-up policy, some of the cases that spoke to the Egyptian Front confirmed that they had already been arrested from their homes by the National Security for the follow-up procedure; they were released afterwards. B.M. says she underwent the arrest:

*They took me from my house at 10 in the morning, to an office or a room, I don’t know the place I entered. Then the officer asked me to write my phone password and took it and went outside. I remained seated there until 4 in the afternoon, then he came, removed my blindfolds, uncuffed my hand and gave me my ID card while saying; ‘Okay! Go home and come back at your regular appointment next month.’*

S.M. was also arrested from her house for the follow-up procedure.

*They took me from the house, the officer placed me in some room and asked why I was crying. I responded by asking why I was here, and why they took away my phone. This way my family will know nothing about me and I don’t understand anything. He said I should tell him why I am here, then he took me outside for many hours, while still not knowing where I was, and a while later the officer took me inside and asked me again about my follow-up, repeating the same conver-*

[^29]: Online chat, April 2021.
[^30]: Online chat, April 2021.
[^31]: Online chat, April 2021.
sation as every time; what is your name and your case, he kept asking me all over, I was released the day after\textsuperscript{32}.

In this case, these people are subjected to arbitrary arrest, as the arrest process takes place without permission from the investigation authorities, in addition to being subjected to illegal detention as well.

Arbitrary arrest or illegal detention in its previous form are not the only practices that show how the unspecified national security authority challenges the principle of the rule of law, as this authority also infringes upon the decisions of the investigative authority represented by the Public Prosecution, as the imposition of precautionary measures should only decided by the judicial authorities according to Egyptian law. One of the persons subject to follow-up reported that National Security forced him to continue implementing the precautionary measures, even though the State Security Prosecution had issued a decision to end these measures. M.H. stated,

\begin{quote}
My precautionary measures were cancelled by the prosecution two months ago and I took a certificate of that to the police department. The State Security officer blindfolded, hit and interrogated me, saying that they are the ones who cancel the measures, not the prosecution, and he forced me to attend measures two days a week for 3 hours illegally. He also said ‘You will abide by your measures as they are and follow up as well’, since then I have been committed to the measures two days a week, 3 hours a day in addition to a day of follow-up\textsuperscript{33}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Online chat, April 2021.
\textsuperscript{33} Online chat, April 2021.
Conclusion

This report concluded a general definition of the follow-up policy and a description of its various forms through its practical implementation. It also demonstrated the notable development of this old policy and how it has extended to include former political detainees with different affiliations, not just those with extremist religious ideologies, as the situation had been before the January revolution. Given the absence of an explicit legal basis that permits National Security officers to summon individuals for the purpose of follow-up, it is still difficult to maintain that this policy is an illegal procedure in light of the existence of a broad provision in Article 125 of Chapter Three, Section Four of the Police Act, where the text would legitimize the actions of national security officers, even if they are not legally stipulated, under the pretext of implementing the agency’s powers and achieving its objectives.

The report concluded that through the implicit as well as direct practices accompanying the follow-up policy, there are a large number of serious violations. The first violation is placing restrictions on freedom of movement and preventing those subject to follow-up from moving outside their place of residence or outside the country except with the permission of the national security officer. The report revealed the negative impact of this restriction on the social, educational and professional lives of these people, forcing some of them to leave their jobs or suspend a number of personal projects.

Another result found by the report was that those subjected to follow-up were subjected to unjustified detention for long periods that would last for days inside the National Security headquarters. In some cases, this detention was preceded by arbitrary arrests. It is usual for this detention to be accompanied by physical and verbal abuse, cruel treatment, and threats of imprisonment again. Which leads to another conclusion, which is that follow-up deliberately targets the psychological well-being of those subject to it and hinders their overcoming of the psychological trauma generated by the prison experience and also obstructs their medical recovery from the negative effects of this experience, as the follow-up provokes that trauma and creates in these people a permanent feeling of fear of re-living the traumatic experience again.

The follow-up comes as a practice among many practices that show that national security enjoys an undefined authority, which is the result of the loose law, as well as the dysfunction of the principles of the rule of law and the separation of powers in the Egyptian state. This authority allows the National Security Sector to carry out practices with highly questionable legality, one of which is the follow-up, but it is not the only one. There is also the rotation of political opponents pending new cases in order to circumvent the maximum period of pretrial detention in Egyptian law, and there is also the so-called “national security visa”; that its issuance is considered the basic condition for the release from prison, not the judicial authority decisions of release or even the expiration of judicial sentences for these persons.
Life Restrained by State Security’s Follow-up

Report on the National Security’s follow-up policy towards former detainees

Egyptian Front for Human rights is a European Organization established in Czech Republic in 2017. The front works to improve the status of human rights in Egypt through research, advocacy and legal work in areas such as criminal justice.